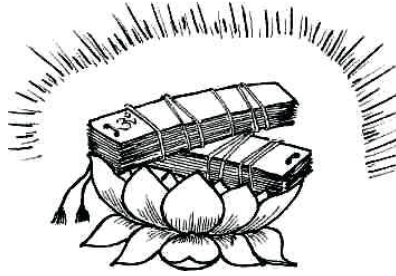


Female Dīkṣā-gurus

Do we need them?



Śrīdhara Śrīnivāsa Dāsa

Female Dīkṣā-gurus

Do we need them?

Śrīdhara Śrīnivāsa Dāsa





His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the original apostle of pure love of Kṛṣṇa and His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness), who as the apostle of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's causeless mercy delivered it equally upon all, especially upon the most fallen conditioned souls.

Finally this book is dedicated to my spiritual master His Holiness Bhakti Vikāsa Swami and to all the faithful followers of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who as his apostles carry on the baton of propagation of the *saṅkīrtana* movement by worldwide preaching of Lord Caitanya's message and teachings contained in numerous publications of His Divine Grace.

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Female Dikṣā-gutis: Do we need them?

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A Divine Prophecy, Śrī Nammālvār's predictions on Lord Caitanya

Śrī Nammālvār's predictions (Tamil)

The following abbreviations are used in this book:

SB – Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam; Cc – Caitanya Caritamṛta; Bg – Bhagavad-gīta; Np-Bs – Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā; Dt-HBV – Digdarśinī-ṭīkā Hari Bhakti Vilāsa; Special Note:

The original format, language, and symantic for quoted texts are preserved and presented as they were presented in their respective publications.

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Background

Breaking news

On the auspicious day, August 19, 2022, of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī or the appearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇī mātā became the first female devotee to become a *dīkṣā-guru* in ISKCON, despite great resistance and strong protest by ISKCON India and various devotee congregations.¹ As a result, ISKCON has now become an organization that has officially embraced and implemented *apasampradāya aśāstrīya* concepts (actions that are not sanctioned by scriptural injunctions) in this case institutionalization of FDG.²

Furthermore, on August 28, 2022, the Governing Body Commission's Executive Committee (GBC-EC) responded to ISKCON India leaders' letter of concern³ regarding the novel concept of women protecting women. The GBC-EC response⁴ clearly demonstrates that mutual communication between the two sides is low to non-existent and the two teams have been working in Silos.

The GBC and ISKCON India Bureau dialogue

In its August 28, 2022 response, the GBC Executive Committee (GBC-EC) claimed that the ISKCON India leaders are misinformed about the current status of FDG implementation and that the initiations given by Nārāyaṇī mātā were the first ones and that they were done with the GBC's prior approval. The following is an excerpt from that response, as cited below, with our additions in square brackets:

[1] It seems that a significant degree of misinformation is circulating regarding the GBC's desire for additional dialogue with the Bureau members (in response your request), and the two initiations by Narayani devi dasi this past week. ...

1 <https://iskconnews.org/narayani-devi-dasi-initiates-her-first-diksa-disciple/>

2 FDG, WDG, and VDG – female *dīkṣā-gurus*, woman *dīkṣā-gurus* and vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus* respectively.

3 <https://tinyurl.com/bdcrdpfm/>

4 <https://tinyurl.com/47mmh3au>

Regarding Narayani devi dasi:

[2] The recent GBC resolution does not limit the number of disciples that Narayani dasi may accept. The decision states that Narayani has fulfilled “all of the requirements per ISKCON law” and “can initiate where allowed by the RGB or similar body.” (This refers to the geographic “opt out” explained above.) There was no numerical limitation discussed or mandated. ...

[3] As noted in the same GBC decision, any initiations by other Vaishnavis are on hold for ninety days from the passage of that resolution (August 10) during which we hope to have a constructive dialogue with Bureau representatives. Our guidelines for such a dialogue are elaborated in point # 3-6 of the resolution, specifically that four members of the Bureau meet with four GBC members (without Basu Ghosh prabhu or Jayapataka Swami). We hope to hear from the India leadership soon regarding who will take the lead from the Bureau side and connect with the GBC representatives.

From the above response (marked [2] and [3]) it appears on the surface that Nārāyaṇī mātā is the first FDG and that she was approved on an “exception” basis, because as per point [3], the GBC has placed initiations by other vaiṣṇavis on hold for ninety days pending a “constructive” dialogue with the ISKCON India Bureau representatives. As mentioned before, the point marked [1] in the above cited excerpt clearly demonstrates that mutual trust between the two sides is poor to non-existent.

In the past I was asked by both sides involved in the dialogue, and by the dialogue moderation team, to conduct an indepth research project on the scriptural validity of female *dīkṣā-gurus*, *vaiṣṇava-culture* and *vaiṣṇava-tradition* in regards to FDG. This book is a direct result of that research and is based on wide analysis of these topics in consultation with various authorized practioners of Vedic culture and tradition, specifically and not limited to the Śrī-vaiṣṇava tradition. During the course of my indepth research I had to interact with members of both sides and the moderation team extensively. Based on my close

observation I humbly feel that the relationship between the GBC and ISKCON India Bureau is nearing it's nadir. In my humble opinion, the main reason for this strained relationship is that the GBC-EC continue to avoid open and straight forward discussion on the philosophical standing of the FDG proposal in a proper traditional manner as prescribed in Vedic scriptures.

Moreover, the GBC-EC never included the India ISKCON Bureau members at any stage of its research that has lasted over 20 years now, but has done its own isolated research based on modern techniques of interpretations, hermeneutics, and arguments based on sentiments and not centered upon *śāstra*. Certainly, not gaining the confidence of ISKCON India Bureau's scholars throughout the process is a huge mistake on the part of the GBC-EC, and is the main reason for the widening of the gap between the two sides almost to a point of no return. The differences of opinion between the two sides on Vedic culture and the role of female devotees in Vedic and Vaiṣṇava tradition is so huge that recently the North American GBC banned an ISKCON India Bureau member from speaking about these topics at ISKCON centers of North America, indicating a total lack of mutual trust.⁵ The recent GBC-EC communication of wanting to exclude scholars such as Basu Ghosh Prabhu from the ISKCON India Bureau panel in further discussions is an explicit display of the acrimonious relationship and lack of mutual trust.

It seems that the Bureau is upset with the GBC because the GBC kept it waiting for discussions and dialogues to happen on the one hand, meanwhile behind the scenes the GBC simultaneously and secretly worked on setting the foundation for female ISKCON devotees to initiate disciples on the other hand.

The Bureau's anger against the GBC is only exasperated by the fact that Nārāyaṇī mātā is not the first female *dikṣā-guru* in ISKCON, but prior to her, in June 2021 Sāndamaṇī mātā became the first female guru in ISKCON. The following

⁵ Evidence to be provided upon request.

exhibit is the testimony of the first female disciple, Mirabai dd (Michelle Mistelske), published on the social media, who received both her *harināma-dīkṣā* (first initiation) and *gayatri-mantra-dīkṣā* (second initiation) from Sāndamaṇī mātā, and publicly admitting that with the help of Kalākāntha Prabhu, a GBC member and ISKCON guru, they secretly worked out a way for her to get initiated by Sāndamaṇī mātā.⁶ It would be only fair and accurate to state that this move by Kalakantha Prabhu served as ammunition for the already heated dispute of acrimonious relationship between the GBC and the ISKCON India Bureau. One may wonder if it is fair for GBC to allow any FDG initiations while the dialogue with the India Bureau members to sort out the differences of opinion is still in progress.

Analysis of the GBC-EC response

Notwithstanding the ISKCON India Bureau's and its associated committee's response, several senior disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda have repeatedly advised and cautioned the GBC to not implement institutionalized FDG.⁷ A senior and scholarly devotee within ISKCON circles analysed⁸ the GBC-EC response to be a “gas lighting” tactic by the GBC-EC body calculated to keep innocent devotees buried under layers of confusion by repeated propaganda of misinformation and lies.

In this section we will further elaborate on some of the other points in the GBC-EC's response using the correct lens of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings contained in his books.

GBC relies on wrong hermeneutics

In its August 28, 2022 response, the GBC body wrote the following:

3. As discussed many times with the Bureau representatives, we find the quote from the SB 4.12.32 to be descriptive and not

⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/mw2ax7xs>

⁷ Visit <https://tinyurl.com/4t2b24dm> for details

⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/4ewk84pb>

prescriptive for all times and places. Otherwise, why would Śrīla Prabhupāda have written this: “I hope that all of you, men, women, boys and girls, become spiritual master?” (Vyasa-puja Address, London August 22nd, 1973)

First of all, the GBC wants the followers of ISKCON to believe that the statements contained in the verses and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (SB or SB) to be merely historical narrations meant for outsiders and not effective actionable instructions for ISKCON devotees. Does this mean that the GBC is now towing the line of *ṛtvik* propaganda by considering Śrīla Prabhupāda’s July 9, 1977⁹ letter in connection with the *dīksā-guru* system as the final order that trumps all of his statements made in his books?

Secondly, the GBC’s position disregards Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instruction to keep his purports contained in his books as the central point. Hence, by classifying the SB 4.12.32 purport not as a prescription for ISKCON devotees but a mere description of an historic narration are they not effectively accusing Śrīla Prabhupāda of adopting double standards and presenting incoherent instructions?

Thirdly, contrary to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions in his purport to Cc *Madhya* 20.352 to keep *śāstra* at the center, the GBC-EC states that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to keep his instructions over and above *śāstra*, as cited below:

4. Regarding your quoting of sastric texts, we note this: “If a spiritual master does not speak according to the revealed scripture, he is not to be accepted.” It is the GBC’s stated position that Śrīla Prabhupāda is not just the *dīksā guru* of many of us, but the Founder-Acarya of all of ISKCON. Thus, all *śāstra* should be understood through the lens of his purports and example, as well as the mood and instructions of Lord Caitanya.

The GBC-EC seems to have borrowed its idea regarding Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports being the lens of understanding from the

⁹ *Ṛtvik* followers of ISKCON claim this letter to be Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final order that suspends all future initiations within ISKCON once and all for ever.

Śāstric Advisory Council's (SAC) controversial hermeneutics manual.¹⁰ The main problem with the SAC hermeneutics manual is that there is no mention of hierarchy of *pramāṇas* among *śāstric* injunctions (*Śrutī* or Vedic literatures, *Smṛtī* or conclusive statements based on Vedic literatures, *Purāṇas*, *itihāsa*, *Pāñcarātra*, *aithya* etc.). Though the SAC hermeneutics manual defines Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings as the lens through which ISKCON devotees must understand *śāstric* injunctions, they have clearly avoided identifying the method of harmonization between apparent contradictions between Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and the *śāstric* injunctions. Whereas, it is not within the scope of this book to refute the SAC's hermeneutics papers, it will suffice to state that in their entire volume of information published, reference to the purport to Cc *Madhya* 20.352, which gives the ISKCON devotees the guiding principle for harmonizing apparent conflicts, is conspicuous by its absence. Hence, even if we accept the statement of GBC-EC that we should understand *śāstra* through the lens of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports at face value, then all of us including the GBC-EC are bound to accept the purport to Cc *Madhya* 20.352 in which Śrīla Prabhupāda categorically stated the guiding principle for us to understand his instructions, as cited below:

“The actual center is the *śāstra*, the revealed scripture. If a spiritual master does not speak according to the revealed scripture, he is not to be accepted. Similarly, if a saintly person does not speak according to the *śāstra*, he is not a saintly person. The *śāstra* is the center for all.” – [Cc *Madhya* 20.352 purport]

The main theme of the above purport is *śāstra-yonitvāt*: to find answers to apparent contradictions using the lens of *guru-vākyas* and *sādhū-vākyas* that center upon *śāstra-vākya* or scriptural injunctions. Following the footsteps of his predecessors, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself faithfully adopted this principle in his statements (written and spoken), as shown below:

10 “Hermeneutics Papers” – <https://gbc.iskcon.org/sac-papers/>

The *Brahma-sūtra* (1.1.3) confirms this fact also: *śāstra-yonitvāt*. commenting upon this *Brahma-sūtra* aphorism, Śrī Madhvācārya says, “The *Ṛg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, *Mahābhārata*, *Pāñcarātra* and the original *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* are all Vedic literatures. Any literature following the conclusive statements of these Vedic literatures is also to be considered Vedic literature. That literature which does not conform to Vedic literature is simply misleading.” [Cc *Madhya* 6.147 purport]

However, the SAC hermeneutics papers teach one to see through the lens of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings disconnected from the statements of *śāstra*. Hence, it is not surprising to note that GBC-EC does not see Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports such as SB 4.12.32, that are based on *śāstra-vākya*, as prescriptions. Nor do they realize that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s, Lord Caitanya’s, and all our previous ācāryas’s moods and instructions were to adopt the *śāstra-yonitvāt* principle – “the *śāstra* is the center for all.” The fact that the GBC-EC and SAC failed to even acknowledge the importance of the above cited Cc *purport*, indicates that their hermeneutics certainly fails the “grain of rice test” in establishing *siddhānta* or proper understanding of the truth.¹¹

In short, a hermeneutics paper, minus reference to the purport to Cc *Madhya* 20.352, cannot shine light on resolving the apparent contradictions that exist amongst various *śāstras* and amongst Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions. It seems to be a deliberate attempt on the part of the hermeneutics papers to mislead ISKCON devotees into thinking that Śrīla Prabhupāda is equal to or greater than *śāstra*, which is completely contradictory to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings contained in his purports such as Cc *Madhya* 20.352 and Cc *Madhya* 6.147 etc.¹² Furthermore, do such actions on the part of the GBC-EC not undermine Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions regarding keeping his books as the basis? SB 10.33.31 clearly instructs that one should carry

11 An old proverb from Vedic tradition and culture, which means that testing a grain of rice from a pot is sufficient to test the whole pot in which it was cooked.

12 In a latter section we refute this position based on *śāstra-sādhū-guru-vākyas*.

out only those actions of the Lord's empowered servants that match their words. Śrīla Prabhupāda, Gauḍīya ācāryas, and Lord Caitanya always harmonized apparent conflicts amongst various statements of previous ācāryas with śāstra as the center; an example of which is cited below:

According to Madhvācārya, there are two *tattvas*, or factors. One is independent, and the other is dependent. The first *tattva* is the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu, and the second is the *jīva-tattva*. Lakṣmīdevī, being dependent on Lord Viṣṇu, is sometimes counted among the *jīvas*. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, however, describe Lakṣmīdevī in accordance with the following two verses from the *Prameya-ratnāvalī* of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. The first verse is a quotation from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

<i>nityaiva sā jagan-mātā</i>	<i>viṣṇoḥ śrīr anapāyinī</i>
<i>yathā sarva-gato viṣṇus</i>	<i>tathaiveyaṁ dvijottama</i>
<i>viṣṇoḥ syuḥ śaktayas tistras</i>	<i>tāsu yā kīrtitā parā</i>
<i>saiva śrīs tad-abhinneti</i>	<i>prāha śiṣyān prabhur mahān</i>

“O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, Lakṣmījī is the constant companion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, and therefore she is called *anapāyinī*. She is the mother of all creation. As Lord Viṣṇu is all-pervading, His spiritual potency, mother Lakṣmī, is also all-pervading. Lord Viṣṇu has three principal potencies — internal, external and marginal. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has accepted *parā-śakti*, the spiritual energy of the Lord, as being identical with the Lord. Thus she is also included in the independent *viṣṇu-tattva*.”

In the *Kānti-mālā* commentary on the *Prameya-ratnāvalī* there is this statement: *nanu kvacit nitya-mukta jīvatvaṁ lakṣmyāḥ svikṛtaṁ, tatrāha-prāheti; nityaiveti padye sarva-vyāpti-kathanena kalākāṣṭhety ādi-padya-dvaye, śuddho 'pīty uktā ca mahāprabhunā svaśiṣyān prati lakṣmyā bhagavad-advaitam upadiṣṭam; kvacid yat tasyās tu dvaitam uktam, tat tu tad-āviṣṭa-nitya-mukta jīvam ādāya saṅgatas tu*. “Although some authoritative Vaiṣṇava disciplic successions count the goddess of fortune among the ever-liberated living entities (*jīvas*) in Vaikuṇṭha, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, in accordance with the statement in the *Viṣṇu*

Purāṇa, has described Lakṣmī as being identical with the *viṣṇu-tattva*. The correct conclusion is that the descriptions of Lakṣmī as being different from Viṣṇu are stated when an eternally liberated living entity is imbued with the quality of Lakṣmī; they do not pertain to mother Lakṣmī, the eternal consort of Lord Viṣṇu.” – [SB 6.19.13 purport]

Hence, since Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya always kept *śāstra* as the center of all in their activities and statements, as per SB 10.33.31 we as their followers must also keep *śāstra* as the center. Similarly, among Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions contained in various formats, his instructions contained in his books shall be the center of all.

In the following chapters of this book, we will elaborate further in order to prove that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to Cc *Madhya* 20.352 is the rudder of the ISKCON ship. Moreover, neglecting this purport also means that the ISKCON ship foolishly attempts to cross over the ocean of material existence without bothering to install an anchor.

GBC nullifies śāstra

One of the previously cited internet articles,¹³ clearly explains through citations from *śāstra* and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports that women being protected by other women is *aśāstrīya* or against scriptural injunctions.

In addition, we now present some more points to show that such actions of creating new protectors for women are not only against *śāstra* but also, such actions nullify the absolute authority of the Vedas. This is so because such concocted ideas would mean that ISKCON women are not bound by the Vedic injunction of being protected by a male family member at all times. All Vedic scriptures state that a woman shall be protected by her father before marriage, by her husband after marriage, and by her sons in her old age. In other words, a woman shall be protected only by these three categories of men who are related

¹³ <https://tinyurl.com/bdcrdpfm>

to her. Nowhere in the Vedic scriptures it is stated that a woman can be protected by another woman or by the entire society etc. Hence, this is an unauthorized concoction on the part of the GBC to create a new injunction which is not sanctioned by the Vedic scriptures.

As a result, the GBC has nullified the supreme authority of the Vedas. The GBC misuses the instance of Śrīla Prabhupāda creating the *brahmacārīṇī asrama*, wherein devotee women are protected by the temple management, as the precedence for protecting FDGs as well. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda also instructed the temple presidents to arrange for the marriages of these devotee women in the *brahmacārīṇī asrama* and hence it was never intended to be a permanent arrangement.¹⁴ Moreover, is not citing Śrīla Prabhupāda as a precedence for their *aśāstriya* actions reminiscent of the actions of Advaita Ācārya's very confidential servant named Kamalākānta Viśvāsa as described in Cc *Ādī* chapter 12? In two verses from Cc *Ādī-līlā* (12.35 and 12.49), we find that Lord Caitanya severely chastised Kamalākānta Viśvāsa for acting against his guru's interest and hence called him a *bāuliyā* or one belonging to an unauthorized sect who does not know things as they are. In this case, the GBC has double faulted: 1) by creating a new injunction to nullify the Vedic injunction in regards to protection of women. 2) By citing Śrīla Prabhupāda as a precedence, they damage his status as *jagad-guru*, and portray Śrīla Prabhupāda as a violator of scriptural injunctions. Is this any different from Kamalākānta Viśvāsa, who according to the Lord, invaded the privacy of Advaita Ācārya and damaged His religious principles?¹⁵

14 That the *brahmacārīṇī āśrama* is a good success is very good news. But the best thing will be if the grown-up *brahmacārīṇīs* get married. According to Vedic culture, woman is never to remain independent. I shall be glad if the *brahmacārīṇīs* can have nice husbands, and live as *gṛhasthas*. (Letter to Satsvarūpa, August 8, 1968)

15 "Advaita Ācārya, My spiritual master, should never accept charity from rich men or kings, because if a spiritual master accepts money or grains from such materialists his mind becomes polluted." – [Cc *Ādī* 12.50]

Introductory sections

This book is a refutation to the nonsensical propositions dressed up as *siddhānta* presented in the pro-FDG books authored by Kaunteya Dās¹ and Madan Mohana Dās². This text aims to establish that female *dīkṣā-gurus* are a rare exception to the general rule because the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 1.42 – 44) forbid women who are not at the level of *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām* (seeing the Lord face to face) from becoming *ācāryas*—and that the GBC resolutions along with the latest amendment authorizing FDG implementation within International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) stand in opposition to scriptural injunctions (*śāstra-viruddha*).

In 2021, the GBC enacted legislation allowing women to initiate disciples after years of unresolved controversy surrounding this radical departure from tradition.³

This book will aid the rank and file devotees of ISKCON to decide for themselves whether the GBC has truly acted to transparently represent the epistemological principles that Śrīla Prabhupāda established, and also discuss how negligence in this regard will lead to significant and sometimes even radical departures from *śāstric* teaching, and the example given by our *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Apparent contradictions must be resolved, and some methods are better than others. Without a doubt, as stated before, the Cc *Madhya* 20.352 purport presents the significance of harmonizing *guru-vākyas* and *sādhu-vakyas* with *śāstra-vākyas* or scriptural injunctions.

Within 45 years since the departure of Śrīla Prabhupāda from our manifest vision, ISKCON, has ignored these imperative

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- 1 “Did Śrīla Prabhupāda Want women dīkṣā-gurus? Eye of the storm” — Kaunteya Dās
 - 2 Guru: The Principle, Not the Body, Madana-mohana Dāsa, 2020: <https://tinyurl.com/yc7w5k5k>
 - 3 the amended law was brought forward for voting on December 22, 2021: <https://tinyurl.com/2448xcx3>,

instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned in the Cc *Madhya* 20.352 purport. Without an exception, deviations from this pivotal instruction have been the root cause for all major controversies that have plagued, and are continuing to plague the ISKCON society.

The official resolutions authorizing “females as *dīkṣā-gurus*” is an example of failure of not keeping *śāstras* as the center of all – effectively destroying and dividing ISKCON into multi-schisms. With the GBC-EC approving and implementing “women or female *dīkṣā-gurus*,” (FDG) the twenty years of debate and discussions have failed to protect ISKCON from becoming an *apa-sampradāya*, a deviant sect.

Fundamental Issues

For over 45 years since the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, ISKCON worldwide has been struggling to come to a proper understanding of the implementation of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Most significantly there is very little knowledge on the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* on the part of a majority of ISKCON devotees, including its leaders – root cause for the lack of clarity that abiding by *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* facilitates *Bhāgavata-dharma* or *Vaiṣṇava-dharma*. History has shown us that neglecting the *pāñcarātra* system and blaspheming *varṇāśrama-dharma* as superfluous, has left ISKCON members struggling in light of spiritual fall-downs and irreconcilable controversies, now threatening to cause multi-fragmented schisms within the society.

As mentioned before, this writing focuses on refuting two books that promotes a major contentious issue – Women or female or *vaiṣṇvā dīkṣā-gurus* (WDG/FDG/VDG). The book by Kaunteya Das was originally published in 2013, at that time ISKCON leadership and its research team (SAC) had not researched the *pāñcarātra* scriptures in detail. Nonetheless, between 2017 to 2019, an independent team of ISKCON devotees dedicated numerous hours to the topic of FDG – researching *Nārada-*

pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā, and they found direct evidence from that scripture that forbids women from becoming gurus. In 2019, the evidence and associated findings of their research was published to the general population of devotees in the form of a book.⁴ About an year later Madan Mohan Das, an active deputy to the GBC, also published his book refuting the findings of the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* evidence.

After going through the contents of books in contention (Kaunteya Das and Madan Mohan Das) we find two major issues that are salient causes for many of their misconceptions, as stated below:

- Blatant misunderstanding that the *pāñcarātra* systems (*Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*) recommends “*smārta*” practices that are not meant for Vaiṣṇavas.
- Lack of faith on *varṇāśrama-dharma* arising from lack of understanding of *varṇa* classification/detection and *vaidika* processes.

Despite Śrīla Prabupāda’s numerous instructions, contained in his books, lectures, personal correspondence, and conversations, on the importance of the restoration of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, ISKCON leaders have blatantly neglected the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* system and *Daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* based on *Nārada-pāñcarātra*. ISKCON leaders justify their reluctance to implement *Daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*, by cherry picking Śrīla Prabupāda’s conversations and personal correspondences to his disciples, obscured from its broader context. In subsequent of this we present numerous of such actions that are clear deviations from the original mission and intention of the Founder-Ācārya.

The Vedic and *pāñcarātra* scriptures are against FDG

As stated before, *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 1.42 – 44) forbid women who are not at the level of

⁴ “Vaisnava-diksa according to Nārada-pāñcarātra” by Damodara Dasa (BVKS) and Krishna-kirti Dasa (BVKS) at: www.archive.org/details/VDNAP

pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām (seeing the Lord face to face) from becoming *ācāryas* or *dikṣā-gurus*:

na jātu mantra-dā nārī na śūdro nāntarodbhavaḥ
nābhiśasto na patitaḥkāma-kāmo 'py akāminah [42]

“Even then, a woman, a śūdra and an antyaja can never act as an initiating guru, nor can anyone who is accused of a great sin or is fallen. And an aspiring disciple who is already accomplished in detachment (akāmī) should never accept a guru who is infected with material desires.”

striyaḥ śūdrādayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam
yathārham mānanīyāś ca nārhanty ācāryatām kvacit [43]

“Women, śūdras, etc. can give ethical and moral instructions and are also worthy of respect as per their qualifications and conditions but are not entitled to get the position of *ācārya*.”

kim apy atrābhijāyante yoginaḥ sarva-yoniṣu
pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām naiṣāṁ cintyaṁ kulādikam [44]

“But because perfect yogis (or nitya-siddha devotees) who are on the stage of yoga-pratyakṣa (i.e. are self-realized—seeing God face-to-face), *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*, may take birth in any family tradition, in such cases no consideration of kula, gender, etc. as mentioned earlier apply (they can become *ācāryas*).”

The ISKCON GBC’s pro-FDG leaders have dubbed this evidence as pertaining to “*smārta*” practices and hence it is not relevant to ISKCON. Some devotees (leaders) even spread wrong information that ISKCON follows exclusively the *bhāgavata-mārga*, which is different from the *pāñcarātri-vidhi* and hence have nothing to do *pāñcarātri-vidhi*. Such tactics of spreading wrong messages and blind rejection of *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses are in direct violation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements contained in his teachings, as cited below (emphasis ours):

According to the *pāñcarātri* system, however, even though everyone is a *śūdra* due to the absence of the *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*, if a person has but a little tendency to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, he should be given the chance to elevate himself to the transcendental platform of devotional service. Our Kṛṣṇa

consciousness movement adopts this *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*, ... – [SB 4.31.10 purport]

There are two different ways of approaching the Supreme Lord. One is called *bhāgavata-mārga*, or the way of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the other is called *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*. *Pāñcarātrika-vidhi* is the method of temple worship, and *bhāgavata-vidhi* is the system of nine processes which begin with hearing and chanting. The Kṛṣṇa conscious movement accepts both processes simultaneously and thus enables one to make steady progress on the path of realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. – [SB 4.13.3 purport]

FDG is the antithesis to *daiva-varṇāśrama*

Notwithstanding the clear scriptural evidence against FDG, the proponents of FDG, in the name of offering reconciliations to the statements of gurus and *sādhus*, tacitly substitute the original context of the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas*. Let us consider the following statement of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (emphasis ours):

“Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is Kamala Mañjarī, a personal associate of Rādhārāṇī. He directed me to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*. I must obey his order. **An *ācārya* is not under *śāstra*. He can make *śāstra*.** Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the *ācārya*, has inspired me in various ways. By his mercy and that of Śrīla Gaura Kīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and previous *ācāryas*, we are going on, not caring for the precise technicalities of *smārtas*.”⁵

The proponents of FDG/WDG/VDG use the above statements in emphasis to push their narrative that following these instructions of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, we must accept Śrīla Prabhupāda as the *ācārya* who can make *śāstras*, and that we should accept his “spoken” words⁶ alone as the prescriptive injunction, and implement FDG within ISKCON.

5 – page 230 of Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava, volume 2.

6 – Interview with Professors O’Connell, Motilal and Shivaram, Toronto, 18 June 1976

First of all, the proponents of FDG have intentionally ignored the unambiguous direct statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda on this topic contained in his purport to SB 4.12.32.⁷

Secondly, the key point to understand here is that the context of the statements made by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is in regards to not caring for the precise technicalities of *smārtas* while implementing *daiva-varṇāśrama*, and not meant to be applicable to any generic context. One should remember that Vaiṣṇavas understand “*smārta*” practices as any activity that does not promote exclusive surrender to Lord Viṣṇu. Whereas, *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* and other *pāñcarātra* scriptures gives us the injunctions and practical *vṛttis* (activities) of how to establish a *daiva-varṇāśrama* society based on principle of *śaraṇāgatī* or total surrender to Lord Viṣṇu.

The significant point is that the FDG/WDG/VDG concept is the antithesis to the implementation of *daiva-varṇāśrama* since FDG/WDG/VDG proposes to make women independent gurus, whereas in *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* women are not independent but are protected by the father before marriage, the husband after marriage, and the grown-up son in her old age. Any society which implements *aśāstriya* conceptions such as FDG/WDG/VDG by blind context swapping and exploitation of the *ācārya*’s statements through misinterpretation, is in itself indicative of an *āsuri-varṇāśrama*.

Hence before proceeding to refute the positions of the proponents of FDG, we find it very important to present, in brief, the significance *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, as an integral part of *Nārada-pāñcarātra*; in that it elaborates *vaiṣṇava-dharma* and *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā* through the path of *śaraṇāgatī*, or total surrender unto the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu. Although presented in brief, in the appendix section of this book we establish that according to

7 – “According to śāstric injunctions, ... Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru*,” –SB 4.12.32 purport

the scriptural injunctions, *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* traditions, women unless situated in an exalted spiritual state, could not act as *dīkṣā-gurus*.

After establishing the basic concepts of *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā* as explained in *Nārada-pāñcarātra* we will proceed to refuting these two books of the FDG proponents in detail.

**Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā -
significance**

Section highlights:

1. The importance of the *pāñcarātra saṁhitās* in relation to *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā*.
2. The *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* is a section of the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*. *Pāñcarātrika* is an authorized process equivalent to the *vaidika* process, whose aim is to guide one, irrespective of his caste, towards total surrender to the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu. The *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* elaborates the *pāñcarātrika* process of initiation of all classes of people into exclusive worship of Lord Viṣṇu through *prapatti-yoga*, or the *śraṇāgatī* process. In other words it is the scripture that gives us the process for implementing a *daiva-varṇāśrama* society.
3. In his commentary to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* canto 1, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣṇa cites the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 1.42, 43, 44) to explain how Vidūra, although a *śūdra* by *varṇa* because he had the power (*pratyakṣa-kriṣa*) to see the Lord (*pareśa*) face to face, was an exception to the general rule and instructed King Dhṛtharāṣṭra regarding spiritual knowledge.
4. Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī cites the *Nārada Pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 3.22-25) as the scripture that describes the performance of the *pañca-saṁskāras*,
5. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura cites the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (verse 2.34) as the *pramāṇa* for Lord Caitanya's *upanayana-saṁskāra* in *Caitanya-bhāgavata* (*Ādi-khāṇḍa* 8.7), which explicitly mentions gurus giving initiation to their sons.
6. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his purport to SB 4.31.10, instructs us to refer to many quotations in the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* regarding the implementation of *Daiva-varṇāśrama*.

Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

The *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* is part and parcel of the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* and hence it is to be understood that any reference to the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* is actually referring to the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*. Although based on the Vedas and the *Vedāṅgās*, the *pāñcarātra* is said to be equivalent to the Vedas, and that it was spoken by the Lord Himself to five Ṛṣis (Śaṇḍilya, Upagāyana,

Maunjāyana, Bharadvāja, and Kauśika), in regards to the topic of how to worship the Lord. The *Nārada-pāñcarātra* is a collection of *saṁhitās*, compiled by these sages, headed by Nārada Muni. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in his *Navadvīpa Mahātmya*, mentions the appearance place of the *pāñcarātra*:

pāñcarātra nārādādi ṛṣi pañcajana
prakāśīyā jīva-gaṇe śikhāya sadhana

The five Ṛṣis (Śaṇḍilya, Upagāyana, Maunjāyana, Bharadvāja, and Kauśika) were previously each instructed for one day and night (*pañca-rātra*) by Lord Nārāyaṇa.¹ Headed by Nārada Muni, they wrote the *pāñcarātra* here (in Vidyānagara) to teach the people about practical devotional service. [*Navadvīpa Mahātmya* 13.23]

The *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* was spoken by the sage Bharadvāja Muni in response to the questions raised by the sages as to how a living entity can quickly attain highest perfection.² Just like the Vedas are divided into four divisions, *ṛg-yajuḥ-sāma-atharva-ākhyāḥ*, each Veda is further divided into *śākhās*, or branches. Thus, the *Ṛg-veda* has 21 *śākhās*, the *Yajur-veda* has in total 101 *śākhās* but these 101 are grouped in two broad categories, *śukla-yajuḥ* and *kṛṣṇa-yajuḥ*. *Katyayana*, *Kanva*, and *Madhyandina* belong to the *śukla-yajuḥ*, and *Maitrayani*, *Taittriya* (or *Āpastamba*), *Hiranyakeshin*, *Kapisthala*, and *Katha* belong to the *kṛṣṇa-yajuḥ*. The *Sāma-veda* has 1000 *śākhās*, and the *Atharva-veda* has 9 *śākhās*. For instance, when we say *Taittriya-saṁhitā* that refers to the *kṛṣṇa-yajuḥ-veda*. Similarly, all the *saṁhitās*, including *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*, are very much part of *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, and hence they are not different. To reiterate, when we refer to the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*, we are referring to *Nārada-pāñcarātra* only.

1 Also mentioned in *Rahasyatrayasāram*, by Śrīmān Vedānta Deśika, citing *Māhābhārata Śānti-parva* 359-68.

2 Reference – See verses Np-Bs 1.1-4

The Nārada-pāñcarātra and the Vedas

ISKCON follows the *Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya* disciplic succession in which Śrī Nārada Muni is one of the main preceptors of the *sampradāya* having received the knowledge from Lord Brahmā, and propagating it to all over the universe. Preaching the importance of Śrī Nārada Muni to Vaiṣṇavas is akin to preaching to the choir. Such is the greatness of Śrī Nārada Muni that Lord feels obligated to fulfil the words of the sage [SB 10.10.25].

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.8), it is stated that Śrī Nārada Muni is the third empowered incarnation of the Personality of Godhead. In his purport to that verse, cited below (emphasis ours), Śrīla Prabhupāda states that Śrī Nārada Muni compiled the expositions of the Vedas related to devotional service called the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, which inspires even the lowest of the lowest *karmīs* engrossed in fruitive activities to take up the path of devotional service and attain perfection.

The great Ṛṣi Nārada, who is an empowered incarnation of the Personality of Godhead, propagates devotional service all over the universe. All great devotees of the Lord all over the universe and in different planets and species of life are his disciples. Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the compiler of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, is also one of his disciples. Nārada is the author of *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, which is the exposition of the Vedas particularly for the devotional service of the Lord. This *Nārada-pāñcarātra* trains the *karmīs*, or the fruitive workers, to achieve liberation from the bondage of fruitive work. The conditioned souls are mostly attracted by fruitive work because they want to enjoy life by the sweat of their own brows. The whole universe is full of fruitive workers in all species of life. ...Śrī Nārada informs these foolish fruitive workers how to realize the reality of happiness. He gives direction to the diseased men of the world how one's present engagement can lead one to the path of spiritual emancipation. The physician directs the patient to take treated milk in the form of curd for his sufferings from

indigestion due to his taking another milk preparation. So the cause of the disease and the remedy of the disease may be the same but it must be treated by an expert physician like Nārada. The *Bhagavad-gītā* also gives the same solution of serving the Lord by the fruits of one's labor. That will lead one to the path of *naiṣkarmya*, or liberation.

A careful study of the lines in emphasis, will reveal that the *pāñcarātra* scriptures such as the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* are the very lifeline of every devotee of ISKCON. Those who joined the movement in the initial days were hippies engrossed in fruitive activities of varying degrees. By *pāñcarātra* system they were initiated into the practices of pure devotional service to the Lord thereby ultimately attain the perfection of life. Not realizing the purity and power of the *pāñcarātra* scriptures such as the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* the pro-FDG members deride these scriptures as not meant for ISKCON devotees.

Nonetheless, in his composition, *Āgamanīya Pramāṇyam*, Yāmuna-cārya, the great Śrī-vaiṣṇava *ācārya*, establishes that the *pāñcarātra* system is based on the Vedas, and later on Śrī Vedānta Deśika, another great *ācārya*, established its authenticity in his work *Pāñcarātra-rakṣa*. Hence statements such as “the *pāñcarātra* system is independent of the Vedas or the *vaidika* system,” amounts to blasphemy of the Vedas, just as those worshiping the demigods on an equal or independent platform to that of Lord Viṣṇu are declared as demoniac.

The Pāñcarātrika system versus the Vaidika system

In his teachings (books, lectures, conversations alike) Śrīla Prabhupāda (and our *paramparā-ācāryas* as well), has quoted from the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* on numerous occasions – to establish that the qualities rather than just birth alone determines the *varṇa* of a man. Hence beyond doubt, the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, is the scripture that provides an opportunity and process for anyone, irrespective of their birth, nature, and capabilities, to cultivate spiritual practices of unconditional

surrender at the lotus feet of the Lord based on the *Daiva-varṇāśrama* system.

In the *vaidika* system one follows his *varṇāśrama-dharma*, and gradually attains the ultimate goal of life by situating himself in his natural position, and he performs his duties by following all the rules and regulations, surrendering all the results to the Lord. The *vaidika* system accommodates a wide range of rituals, such as *karma-khāṇḍā* and *jnāṇa-khāṇḍā* activities, and also includes processes of complete and exclusive surrender to Lord Viṣṇu.

Whereas, in the *pāñcarātra* system known as *prapatti-mārga* or *prapatti-yoga*, the one and only goal is to surrender to Lord Viṣṇu, and by this method irrespective of anything – whether one is incapable or does not have the karma to follow strict Vedic injunctions, or even if one is bereft of any *punya* due to his sinful disposition – one can attain the highest perfection of going back home back to Godhead. In this connection, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that ISKCON utilizes the *pāñcarātra* system of initiation:

According to the *pāñcarātrika* system, however, even though everyone is a *śūdra* due to the absence of the *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*, if a person has but a little tendency to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, he should be given the chance to elevate himself to the transcendental platform of devotional service. **Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement adopts this *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*, as advised by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, who says:**

<i>yathā kāñcanatām yāti</i>	<i>kāṁsyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ</i>
<i>tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena</i>	<i>dvijātvaṁ jāyate nṛṇāṁ</i>

“As bell metal, when mixed with mercury, is transformed to gold, a person, even though not golden pure, can be transformed into a brāhmaṇa, or dvija, simply by the initiation process.” (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 2.12) – [SB 4.10.31 purport]

In the Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition and practice it is common to see that even domestic animals get the *tāpa-saṁskāra* performed for them with the understanding that everyone including

animals are eligible to receive the *pañca-saṁskāra*.³ The only qualification required is the complete faith (*mahā-viśvāsa*) in the six limbs of *Śaraṇāgatī*, or the process of surrender called *prapatti* or *bhara-nyasa*, as given in *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*.⁴

Nonetheless, performing *prapatti* or total surrender using the *pāñcarātra* system does not mean that the person can give up or can neglect his duties (*varṇāśrama-dharma*). In fact, the *prapatti* process is only based on the tenets of the Vedas and *Vedānta*, and is based on following *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

*ayaṁ ca yogo vedeṣu vedānteṣu ca gīyate
tathaiva dharma-śāstreṣu divya-śāstra-gaṇeṣu ca*

This yoga is extolled in the Vedas and in the *Vedānta*, as well as in the *dharma-śāstras* and the *pāñcarātras*. [NP-BS 1.5]

*anenaiva hi karmādyā yogāḥ siddhyanti yoginām
siddhir na tad-vyapekṣāsyā tasmād enaṁ param viduḥ*

The perfection of karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga and other types of yogas is dependent on this nyāsa-yoga but the perfection of *nyāsa-yoga* does not depend on any other process such as karma, jñāna, etc. Thus it is known as the best yoga system. [NP-BS 1.6]

*nīścite 'nanya-sādhyaśya paratreṣṭasya sādhanē
ayam ātma-bhara-nyāsaḥ prapattir iti cocyate*

Being independent of other processes it is the most reliable means to achieve perfection, i.e, is to bring the soul to surrender to the supreme worshippable object [Viṣṇu] known as *ātma-bhara-nyāsa* or *prapatti* [NP-BS 1.7]

The Śrī Vaiṣṇava commentator state: *paramātmāni ātma-bhara-nyāsaḥ ātma-bhara-samarpaṇam – ātma-bhara-nyāsaḥ* means that the *ātmā* is brought near (*bhara*) to the Paramātmā or made to surrender to the Paramātmā. [NP-BS 1.7] Unlike the *vaidika* process, which has strict rules and regulations regarding the eligibility of receiving *mantra-dikṣā*, under the *pāñcarātra*

3 *pañca-saṁskāra* – Five purificatory rituals: *tāpa* (accepting austerity), *punḍra* (or *tilaka*), *nāma* (spiritual name), *mantra* (receiving mantras from guru), and *yāga* (performing fire sacrifice).

4 See Np-Bs 1.17–19 and Np-Bs 1.72

system of initiation anyone can get initiated into the system of process of surrendering at the lotus feet of Lord Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead by as cited below:

*na jāti-bhedaṁ na kulam na liṅgaṁ na guṇa-kṛiyāḥ
na deśa-kālau nāvasthāṁ yogo hy ayam apekṣate*

There is no consideration of birth, family, gender, quality, work, etc. nor is there any consideration of time, place, and circumstance in committing oneself to the process of yāsa-yoga.

[NP-BS 1.14]

*brahma-kṣatra-viśaḥ śūdrāḥ striyaś cāntarajās tathā
sarva eva prapadyeran sarva-dhātāram acyutam*

Anyone, whether they be *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *śūdras*, women, *antyajas*, or anyone else, should fully take shelter of Lord Acyuta, the master of all living entities, through the medium of this yoga. [NP-BS 1.15]

It does not imply that one can bypass the levels of austerity imposed by the *vaidika* system by adopting *pāñcarātra* system. In his work, *Rahasyatrayasāram*, quoting Śrīpāda Embār, his predecessor or *pūrvācārya*, Śrīmān Vedānta Deśika counters this misconception. He states that the *pāñcarātra* system is not disconnected from the *vaidika* system. He further states that if one undertakes the *pāñcarātra* system merely out of laziness, or merely to avoid the *vaidika* system then that effort is only as effective as using bundles of sesame stalks to produce a “pond” of sesame oil.⁵

Some devotees within ISKCON lay heavy accusations on the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*⁶ stating that it supports racial discrimination, promotes gender biases, and promotes *bhakti* mixed with modes of material nature (*karma* and *jnana*). It is obvious that these critiques have not consulted the entire chapter of the scripture, specifically the verses cited below:

5 Sesame seeds contain the oil, hence one can easily get maximum quantity of sesame oil using the seeds.

6 By quoting some of its verses (verse 1.59, 1.62) out of context.

*prāyo guṇa-vaśād eṣa kṛtaḥ sarvatra dehinām
sarveṣāṁ sādhayaty eva tāṁs tāt arthān abhīpsitān*

Usually conditioned souls perform *nyāsa* or the process of surrender to demigods like Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva with all kinds of material desires [desiring *anarthas*], and still their desires are fulfilled by the power of surrender. [NP-BS 1.8]

*ananta-jñāna-śakty-ādi-kalyāṇa-guṇa-sāgare
pare brahmaṇi lakṣmīṣe mukhyo'yaṁ sarva-siddhi-kṛt*

But actually this *nyāsa-yoga* is meant to be directed only to Lord Nārāyaṇa, the husband of the goddess of fortune. He is the Supreme Brahman, an ocean of infinite energies and qualities like knowledge, auspiciousness, etc. When directed to Lord Viṣṇu this *nyāsa-yoga* bestows the ultimate perfection [while it can certainly fulfill all other desires also] and thus it is known as the giver of all perfections. [NP-BS 1.9]

Gauḍīya-ācāryas on the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*

In his *Vaiṣṇavānandinī* commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.13.15, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa directly cites the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 1.42, 43, 44) to explain⁷ how Vidūra, although junior to King Dhṛtharāṣṭra and a *śūdra* by *varṇa*, was able to instruct the king in spiritual knowledge. Raising and answering this question, he states that because Vidūra had the power (*pratyakṣa-kṛpā*) to see the Lord (*Pareśa*) face to face, he was an exception to the general rule.

In his purport to SB 4.31.10, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the opportunity to engage oneself in devotional service is far superior to the advantages of all types of births; he quotes

7 *na vidurasya kaniṣṭhatvāc-chūdratvāc ca katham tad upadeṣṭṛtvam?... tathā ca vidurah kaniṣṭho'pi | śūdro'pi sākṣād-dharma-rājatvena pratyakṣikṛta-pareṣattāt tasya tad upadeṣṭṛtvam iti | ata-eva bhāradvāja-saṁhitāyām-strī-śūdrādinām tan-niṣidhya sākṣātkṛta-paratattvānām teṣāṁ tad āha—na jātu mantra-dātāro na śūdro nāntarodbhavaḥ nābhiṣpto na patitaḥ kāma-kāmo'py akāmitaḥ || striyaḥ śūdrādayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam | yathārham mānaniyāś ca nārhanṭy ācāryatām kvacit | kim apy atrābhijāyante yoginaḥ sarvayoniṣu | pratyakṣitātmanāthānām naiṣāṁ cintyaṁ kulādikam || iti ||* Although being a *śūdra* and being junior to him, how could Vidūra impart spiritual instructions to Dhṛtharāṣṭra? Since Vidūra was Dharma-rāja (in his previous birth) himself, he was empowered with the ability to see the Lord face to face (*pratyakṣikṛta-pareṣattāt*), as stated in the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses 1.42 – 44.

from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s famous verse *yasya yal lakṣaṇam ...* (7.11.35, 7.9.10), and another famous verse *yathā kāñcanatām yāti...* from *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (2.12). In that same purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that like the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* and the other *pāñcarātras* are also substantial scriptures that instruct us about *varṇa* determination being based on qualifications, not just birth.

It is not a fact that because one is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family he is automatically a *brāhmaṇa*. He has a better chance to become a *brāhmaṇa* but unless he meets all the brahminical qualifications, he cannot be accepted as such. On the other hand, if the brahminical qualifications are found in the person of a *śūdra*, he should immediately be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa*. **To substantiate this there are many quotations from *Bhāgavatam*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* and the *pāñcarātra*, as well as many other scriptures.** [SB 4.31.10 purport]

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also cites the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (verse 2.34) as the *pramāṇa* for Lord Caitanya's *upanayana-saṁskāra* in the *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* (*Ādi-khāṇḍa* 8.7), which explicitly mentions gurus giving initiation to their sons. We also see that Śrīla Prabhupāda adds the *yathā kāñcanatām yāti ...* (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 2.12) verse as a supporting evidence.

Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī cites the *Nārada Pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 3.22-25) as the scripture that describes the performance of the *pañca-saṁskāras*, and the process of spiritual atonement for a Vaiṣṇava:

“For a Vaiṣṇava, the highest kind of atonement is full surrender to the Lord. Otherwise one should perform activities while remembering Lord Vāsudeva. By seeing the Lord's devotee, touching his feet, serving him, feeding him with cooked grains and water, speaking sweetly, taking the dust of his feet and drinking the water from his feet, eating mahāprasāda of the Lord and chanting the names of the Lord, one can purify oneself especially from the contamination of seeing and touching non-

devotees. One who constantly engages in worshiping Lord Hari is considered to have performed all activities like sacrifice, charity, penance, austerity, atonement etc.”⁸

The *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* contains all the information related to *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā saṁskāras*, and also contains direct answers to the question of who can and cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*.

Apart from that the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* contains many verses that teach us the concept of *śaraṇāgati* or *prapatti* – surrender unto the Lord. So, the authenticity of the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* as a devotional scripture cannot be denied.

8 *prāyaścittam tu paramaṁ prapattis tasya kevalam kuryāt karmātmakam vāpi vāsudevam anusmaran viśuddhyed viṣṇu-bhaktasya dr̥ṣṭyā sparśena sevayā smaraṇenānna-pānādyair girā pāda-rajo-'mbubhiḥ viṣṇor niveditānnādyais tathā tat-kīrtanādibhiḥ abhāgavata-dr̥ṣṭyādeḥ śuddhir eṣā viśeṣataḥ krtā yaj.āḥ samastāś ca dānāni ca tapāmsi ca prāyaścittam aśeṣeṇa nityam arcayatā harim*

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